

Site Allocations DPD submission

Supporting Statement - Open Space/Green Infrastructure

Introduction

Open Space within the Site Allocations Development Plan Document is also described as Green Infrastructure (GI). The definition of green infrastructure is the network of green spaces that lie within and between the Borough's town and villages, providing multiple social, environmental and economic benefits. Green Infrastructure plays an important role in the economic attractiveness and quality of life within the Borough.

Within the Publication Version Site Allocations DPD Green Infrastructure is classified as a critical infrastructure and of equal importance to road networks or waste disposal, and as such, should be well planned and maintained, and viewed as integral to development. Examples of Green Infrastructure the in South Ribble include rivers and water features, woodlands, moorlands, parks, farmland and allotments, and even private residential gardens. Green Infrastructure (GI) performs a variety of functions including the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity as well as providing space for informal and formal recreation.

There are vital components of the Green Infrastructure provision in the Borough and these include, the delivery of three Areas of Separation as identified in Core Strategy Policy 19 and the Site Allocations Policy G6 and G7, an extension to Worden Park in Policy G9, dedicated Green Infrastructure policies that help to protect and enhance the existing Green Infrastructure in policies G4, G6 and G7, the delivery of new Green Infrastructure in policies G8 and G12, and the protection and enhancement of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands areas. This supporting statement focuses on the dedicated Green Infrastructure policies within the Site Allocations DPD that aim to protect and enhance the existing Green Infrastructure and also deliver new GI.

Further to delivering economic growth and new homes in the Borough, the retention and improvement of informal and formal existing facilities across the borough is seen as a key objective of the DPD. Provision of additional informal and formal recreational facilities for public use is also important to ensure suitable levels and standards of GI are available and maintained for the public in the future. The intention is to bring forward a Green infrastructure network of designated and important green space across the borough, which will allow for recreation and amenity use, facilitating other modes of transport such as walking and cycling, helping reduce reliance on the car and maintaining and enhancing ecological corridors and areas for wildlife.

Central Lancashire Open Space Study, 2012

An open space study was carried out on behalf of the Central Lancashire Authorities; this was published in May 2012 and is contained in the library of documents which support the Site Allocations DPD. The purpose of this study was to help aid the process of producing the GI / open space policies within the Core Strategy, the Site Allocations DPD and also support delivery of these policies by flagging up

deficiencies and surplus areas of open space to help achieve a better understanding of the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space within the Borough.

The outcome of the study indicated that nearly two thirds (64%) of assessed open spaces in Central Lancashire scored high for quality. However natural and semi-natural sites scored lower for quality compared to any other typology. This is a reflection of the number of sites of this kind without any specific features or facilities (i.e. woodlands, open grassland). Sites of this typology also tend to score low for personal security given they are often in isolated locations and not overlooked. Often sites of this nature deliberately have very little on-going management or maintenance in order to provide, for example, unmanaged habitats.

The typologies of amenity green spaces, provision for children and young people and parks are all of a good quality. In particular the proportion of allotments and cemeteries are rated as being of a high quality.

The study reports that maintenance of open spaces is regarded as being of a good standard from the site assessments and is seen as a significant contributor to sites' overall quality. This is further reflected in the results from the 2010 household survey carried out on open space; which found nearly all typologies are viewed as being of good or excellent quality. However, more respondents of the 2010 householder survey considered the typologies of amenity green space and provision for children and young people to be of a poor quality.

Methodology

It is a key priority of the Council to protect the environmental quality of Green Space and Infrastructure within the borough. The approach the council has taken is been to maintain the amount of open space to a level very similar to that in the current Local Plan. Tweaks and boundary changes have been made where appropriate.

In terms of a methodology, Officers compared the GiS maps that were prepared to support the Open Space Study with the open space allocations included in the current South Ribble Local Plan. It was a process that allowed officers to overlay the maps, conclude whether there were differences and whether these should be incorporated within the Site Allocations Document. During this process, Officers also compared the open space allocations with the scoring assessment that had been carried out on the open space sites. In conclusion the maps were very similar however when taking on board the scoring assessment, judgements had to be made in terms of either maintaining or de-allocating sites, in many cases these sites were protected as they provide an important amenity value for residents within the borough. It was also concluded that if sites became unmanageable and in appropriate during the plan period, Policy G7, would allow a change of use if the criteria was met, including the site was not required any longer, that loss of the site would not detrimentally affect local amenity and alternative or improved provision could be offered within that locality.

In some cases sites were scored as having low quality or accessibility, however the council viewed these sites as having 'high value' in terms of amenity, for reasons such as providing a natural break in the built environment or contributing to the

nature and landscape within the local area. A good example of this is a recent appeal decision which was dismissed on land classified as Bretherton Terrace in Leyland, this is a site that was classified as having low accessibility and quality in the open space study, however the Inspector supported the Councils approach and concluded the site offered a high amenity value for local residents in the area, this site is allocated as Green infrastructure in the Publication Version Site Allocations DPD.

Other important changes that have been made were to de allocate school buildings from the green infrastructure allocation; however maintain the school fields within that allocation. There are also a small number of open space sites that have been removed from the Green infrastructure allocation as these sites changed their use during the local plan period. Allocations have also been added such as the Central Park, in line with Publication Version Site Allocations Policy G7, as it was noted from the Open Space Study that park provision within the central area of the Borough, such as the Lostock Hall area was deficient. The areas of separation in line with Core Strategy Policy 19 and Publication Version Site Allocations DPD Policy G6 have also been added to the green infrastructure allocations.

In light of the above, the Council have made informed decisions when allocating and maintaining the amount of GI / open space in the borough for the following reasons –

1. The amount of land that is required for development has been allocated within the Publication Version Site Allocations DPD and therefore green infrastructure should be protected to reduce the amount of Green infrastructure/open space loss which in turn will help maintain the high quality natural environment within the borough,
2. There is a high level of future growth planned within the borough and so the green infrastructure policies are aimed at preserving, enhancing and making best use of current environmental assets, and ensuring that new assets are delivered as part of the growth proposals through new development.
3. To help deliver a joined up ‘multi-functional’ network of open spaces and corridors which is promoted as part of the policy direction with the Publication Version Site Allocations DPD; a de-allocation of open space would not have supported this approach.
4. And importantly the Council has received no objections with regards to the GI/open space designations; however support was received for the protection of open space/land. Some small tweaks have been put forward where appropriate, in line with a small number of comments that were received at the publication stage, this mainly relates to boundary changes.

Policy

The policies presented within the publication Version Site Allocations DPD are to ensure the protection and improvement of green infrastructure these policies include G4 – Protected Open Land, G5 – Areas of Separation, G6 – Central Park, G7 – Green Infrastructure, Existing Provision, G8 – Green Infrastructure and Networks – Future Provision, G9- Worden Park and G12 – Green Corridors.

Policy G10 – Green Infrastructure Provision in Residential Development was informed by the Central Lancashire Open Space Study. This study was based on an audit of open space provision across Central Lancashire which also evaluated the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space in South Ribble as stated above. Through this evaluation conclusions were made on the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space in each ward and from this information open space standards were suggested which have been included in Policy G10.

In terms of maintaining the amount of open space allocated within the Site Allocations DPD a more flexible approach has been taken within Policy G10, which states: ‘These standards are to be both flexible and appropriate for each individual development, dependent on location, whether it is for on or off-site Green Infrastructure provision or enhancement of existing provision and facilities’.

Therefore if onsite provision based on the outcomes of the open space study is not seen as appropriate; meaning there is an open space site within close proximity of a proposed development that has a low value in terms of accessibility / quality and needs maintaining/improving, monies from the proposed development could be used to address this issue, this would be classified as an off-site contribution rather than onsite provision being applied.

The open space study has been used to assess the needs of different types of open space based on each ward. These have been detailed within the open space study policy implications and recommendations document where it details deficiencies and surpluses based on the different open space typologies by ward, this also helps towards the implementation of Policy G10, to ensure that a proposed development based on its location delivers the appropriate type of GI/open space.

Conclusion

In conclusion the Council has taken a pragmatic approach to the both maintaining and enhancing the green infrastructure with the Borough for the reasons stated within this statement. Importantly it is a priority of the council to protect the environmental quality within the borough, as well as deliver new homes and economic development sustainably; the approach used allows this to be achieved through the delivery of the plan.